

gown and ane round bonnett, and then it is questioun whether he or his mule knawis best to do his office."

Such testimonies, coming from churchmen who were not and never became Protestants, are incontrovertible. The corruption of the Church was, in sober verity, both deep and widespread. And yet the corrupt priesthood absorbed half the wealth of Scotland, vegetated on the oppression of the poor. In addition to enormous possessions in land, they taxed the long-suffering and the superstition of their parishioners for their own profit. They made use of the weapon of the censures of the Church for their material advantage. They were experts in "cursing," as this part of ecclesiastical discipline was called. They received tithes or teinds and many other ecclesiastical dues, and when the poor man was unable or unwilling to render these dues he was liable to excommunication and civil prosecution. The priest gave him a "cursing," and the cursing, which had become a source of mirth as an ecclesiastical performance, was no jesting matter when it came to the question of parting with the only cow or the best coat of the poor man.

This hatred of an over-rich, worldly clergy, deep enough in the hearts of the common people, rankled in those of the higher classes in a still more acute degree. In contrast to the higher clergy, many of the nobility were poor. They envied the bishops their wealth, they cast longing eyes on the broad lands of the Church. The example of England was not lost on Scotland, and the irritation and antagonism of the Scottish nobility was a theme which the reformers could work up to advantage. When Knox, in 1547, asserted, during a disputation at St Andrews with Wynram, that "the teindis by Goddis law do not apperteane by necessitie to the kirkmen," he was sure of the approval of a large number of discontented and covetous nobles and lairds. Moreover, the Scottish prelates and abbots were not only wealthy; they wielded great political power, and under James V. their political power had been enhanced to the detriment of the nobles. Beaton, for the time being virtual dictator of Scotland, had striven to increase his influence and that of his order by a scheme of confiscation directed against a number of the nobles, and these nobles would not have been Scotsmen